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SYMPOSIUM ON "PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK"

ROBERT D. LEIGHNINGER, JR.

INTRODUCTION

This Symposium is an experiment. It is an attempt to have an argument over a piece of controversial research in a way that will clarify both the methodological and ideological issues involved.

The centerpiece of the Symposium is the article by Specht, Britt, and Frost which follows. It was submitted to the *JSSW* and rejected by both reviewers. I knew that the research had already caused a stir at its first conference presentation and I felt it would become a weapon in battles over reform of undergraduate social work education. I heard the work attacked and defended for what seemed to me the wrong reasons. Too often in research, we see only the conclusions and not the assumptions which undergird the research and the methods which lead to the conclusions.

When I saw the reviews, I thought our reviewers had raised some important questions about research methods and politics. Their efforts convinced me that this argument should not be kept out of our pages but waged in a careful way within them. I asked the reviewers to let me overrule their recommendations and to expand on their criticisms. I asked the authors to consider these criticisms and respond.

All readily agreed, though it is beyond the normal call of duty.

While these exchanges were going on, a paper by Fortune, Green and Kolevzon on a related topic appeared and was accepted for publication. The authors agree to allow it to become part of the Symposium. It would have been nice to involve them and their reviewers in the dialogue, but that might have taken another year; so it is included by itself.

It may be too much to hope that a discussion such as this will improve the quality of the struggles over undergraduate education, but this is our intent. We would appreciate your reactions.